# Botanical Imperialism: the cultivated landscape as carpet

By

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## Abstract

This project is germinated by my immersion in rural Northern Tasmania where I began cultivating heirloom vegetable species as fieldwork and became aware of culturally inherited empirical attitudes towards nature. Fostering a connection between botany and textiles, revealed as pivotal instruments of empirical global trade, I encountered the notion of botanical imperialism through researching Indian textile traditions, focusing on the Mughal 'flower' carpets from the 16th and 17th centuries. Through this research I developed an interest in economic botany, and became aware of the appropriation, control, and economic use of plant cultigens in the context of the capitalist system.

The concept of cultivated landscape as carpet is established to relate fieldwork to broader concerns about commercial cultivation, providing a platform for environmental commentary. The materiality of carpet, a dense, heavy, easily transportable fabric, blanketing what lies beneath - historically associated with wealth and power – metaphorically coalesces with seemingly disparate fields of knowledge, textiles, botany, ecology, empire and trade, that this research intersects.

Early studio works - gouache drawings and woven tapestry - compare imagery from fieldwork to empirical types of botanical representation found in art, science and commerce. Abstract botanical symbols and compositional elements such as centre/edge and shifting scale combine to express the manipulation and transportation of economic botany across global boundaries. The resultant depictions appeared constrained by intellectualised conceptions of the cultivated landscape and act as a catalyst for and are integral to the development and understanding of ensuing work.

This journey positions my practice as contributing to a cultural record of plant conservation in relation to visual artists using botanical representation in their work such as Andrew Seward, Lauren Black, Ruth Johnstone and Chris De Rosa; as a platform for environmental commentary such as Fiona Hall, Janet Laurence, Ken and Julia Yonetani; and those responding intuitively to place and making, such as John Wolseley, G.W Bot and Julie Mehretu.

My deep experiential, sensorial connection to land revealed the potency and reverence of seed. Influenced by transformative life events – birth and death- my art making and thinking processes shifted to become intrinsically linked to fluid, intuitive responses to cultivation, comprising networks of interconnected systems, akin to woven fabric. In subsequent drawing works I made and embedded plant material in paper, creating indexical traces of dried seed heads, with fibrous matter, oil stains, soil remnants remaining as textural impressions. Appearing light as air and heavy as ground, with the trace rendered grey and left bare, the liminal space in the drawings evokes the transformational state of being, encapsulated within making, cultivation, and life cycles contained within this project.

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This project is dedicated to my beautiful mother Prudence Green who made the most wonderful garden to explore as a child. In your death, somehow this project has come to life. With love and a thousand thanks.

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# INTRODUCTION

Underfoot, high in the Indian Himalaya, native vegetation, groundcover and tiny flowering plants trace a lineage to native vegetation in Tasmania, Australia. Descending into a valley populated with tiny villages, a walled garden, a site of cultivation, appears like a verdant carpet in a formidably steep, seemingly barren landscape
(Fig. 1).

I begin ruminating about botany.

Floating gardens, plots of cultivation providing sustenance, hover atop Dal Lake in Kashmir's bucolic capital, Srinagar. Shalimar Bagh, a formally planted Persian-style garden, constructed as a paradise for the Mughal court lies alongside the lake. Harvest season in rural Kashmir, small communities of people threshing walnut trees, picking apples; tomatoes left out to dry in the sun.

I keep ruminating about botany; I begin to ruminate about cultivation.

Highly decorative textiles, giving expression to botanical studies, on everyday cloth and those in conserved collections. Depictions of botany so close in representation to the real specimen swirl through crowds, carried along by myriad people habiting both urban and rural locations throughout India.

I keep ruminating about botany and cultivation; I begin ruminating about the connection between botany and textiles.

This collection of observations and thoughts become embedded in my mind. Do botanical representations within Indian textiles act as a site of preservation for botanical specimens that no longer exist? If so, can I identify what plants have been represented and by whom? Is there a historical botanical study that contemporary motifs are based on? I keep wondering about the significance of the connection between botany and textiles. As my visual art practice encompasses textile traditions (predominately tapestry weaving) and botanical representation, I begin to wonder how I can use my practice as a site of conservation for plant species.

Returning to Australia, having gathered this collection of observations, ruminations and questions, I plant myself within rural Northern Tasmania, where I live and work. The implantation of the gathered collection and its collision with developing my sense of place within the rural landscape, initiates this research project.

**Figure 1** Ladahk, India

This introduction examines initial inquiries that orient my research into the notion of botanical imperialism and seed the conception of the cultivated landscape as carpet. 'The concept of "Botanical Imperialism" is used to link issues of ecology and development. Specifically, it addresses the appropriation, control, and economic use of plant cultigens in the context of the capitalist world system' (Broswimmer 1991, p. 3). Immersed in the rural landscape I become aware of how this notion reveals inherited imperial attitudes toward nature and our current interactions with cultivation. In the ensuing discussion I will contextualise these inherited attitudes in relation to the development of my interest in the representation of economic botany—fuelled by conducting fieldwork—and the formulation of key concepts, resulting from initial studio work.

I arrive at the notion of botanical imperialism through research into the history of Indian textiles, with a focus on fostering the connection between botany and textiles and how this is relevant to extending my practice. There is a wealth of intriguing scholarship on the history of Indian textiles. Gillow and Barnard (2008), Crill (1999, 2008), Guy (1998) and Maxwell (2003) all discuss the astounding mastery of decorative textile traditions, spanning techniques such as weaving, embroidery, appliqué and dying, and their contribution to the immense significance of the Indian subcontinent to the formation of global trade networks. Guy (1998, p. 14) suggests these networks 'evolved from small-scale commercial adventurism in the sixteenth century to the creation of colonial empires in the nineteenth. At all stages in this process Indian Textiles featured as the principal trading commodity'. Botany and textiles are cultural products that contributed to this evolution that presented the opportunity for nation states (specifically, the Dutch East India Company and the British East India Company, both of which bore witness to the patronage of government) to extend global dominion through trade (Chandra 2003, pp. 227–245, Headrick 2010, pp. 59–94).

This preliminary historical research highlights the manipulation of both botany and textiles as tools of trade, in which imperial activities assert monopolies of power through which cultural dissemination occurs. Guy (1998 pp. 7–8) suggests that textiles are an important cultural record due to the transmission of ideas between cultures. Whilst these readings provide a deeper understanding of botanical imperialism and textile traditions, I do not propose this research solely as an interpretation of historical content. Nor do I propose this research as a means of integrating Indian textile techniques into my visual art practice. This historical perspective initiates an interest in how my practice can form a cultural record to transmit ideas about economic botany through the woven form. In developing this interest I follow threads of inquiry within the disciplines of textiles, botany, ecology, empire and trade. I return to land and I return to the loom.

**Figure 2** Golden Valley, Tasmania

Multiple fields of inquiry within this project collide with documenting my sense of place within the rural landscape of Northern Tasmania. I inhabit an agricultural landscape surrounded by rugged and ineffably beautiful, unique wilderness (Fig. 2). The site of my project encompasses interactions with and observations of the natural landscape that is both the product of human intervention (agriculture) and deeply removed from the mark of human culture (wilderness). These interactions and observations within this natural landscape provide the impetus for studio projects. The process of weaving heavily influences the method I use to interpret the landscape and guide studio projects. Making tapestry is a constructive act. The act of weaving, one that embeds itself in memory, on both mental and physical terrains, shapes my mode of thinking. In weaving, as in research, I may be picking up and deciphering across multiple threads simultaneously, to illuminate a question posed. Tapestry weaving is a discontinuous weave. This means that you may build multiple areas of weaving at the same time across the width of the fabric (Fig. 3 illustrates a tapestry in progress on the loom).

**Figure 3** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom*, 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail of work in progress

So, in weaving, disconnected areas are connected through the construction process. The discontinuous nature of tapestry weaving allows pauses and resonance within the process, so that each inquiry is dependent on and reflected in another. This process is reliant upon the layering of thought and action throughout lengthy time periods (tapestry can demand time and perseverance). As I enter my second decade of weaving I am aware of how pervasive this process is within my thinking and my way of observing. I am in fact now constructing narrative within my thinking, in the same fashion as I would on the loom.

The *Sad Red Ground* (2010) (Figs 4, 7, 9) and *Ground Specimen* (2010–2011) (Figs 5, 6, 8, 10) series are initiated by walking amongst and collecting timber from harvested forestry coupes, bearing witness to the devastating transformation of landscape. The emotive power of this experience coalesces with the above research, and in this resonance I find an expression of botanical imperialism in the manipulation of the natural landscape, a cultural inheritance of viewing nature as a product, placing value on nature as a means of commerce. In this studio response I begin to note the disparity between this work and my perceptions of nature, affiliated with the ecological worldview outlined by Mulligan and Hill (2001) and Plumwood (2009), in which the importance of nature is not measured by its use value. This ecological disposition in which the importance of

nature takes predominance over the culture of humanity was developed as a result of working as a walking guide on the Overland track in Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area.
Traditionally, the process of making tapestry involves creating a cartoon (image, design, template) from which the weaving is interpreted. This is usually a literal translation from one medium (painting, drawing, photography etc.) to the woven form. *Sad Red Ground* (2010) is a series of eight intricately layered gouache drawings (Fig. 4).

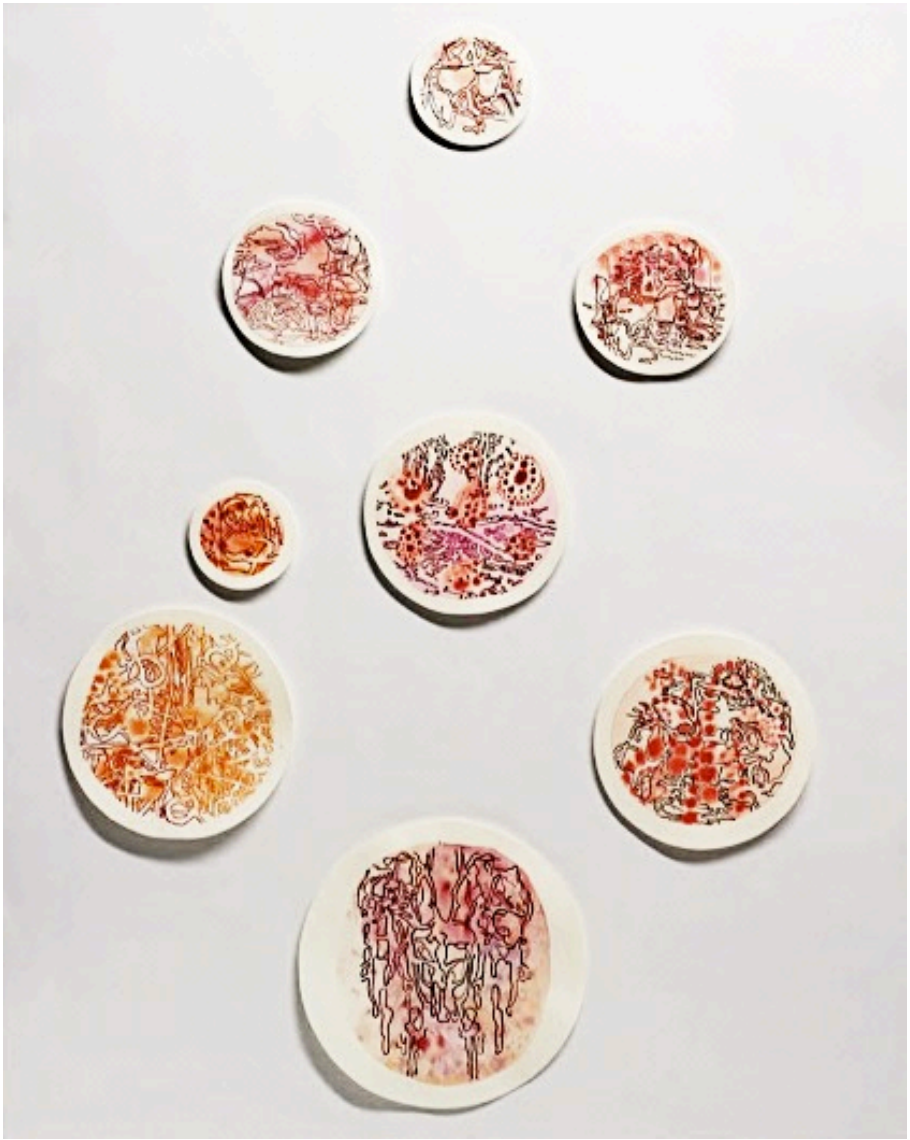

**Figure 4** Hilary Green, *Sad Red Ground*, 2010,
gouache and pencil on watercolour paper, dimensions variable

I consider these works on paper as cartoons for weaving and a way of conjoining my responses to the rural landscape and expanding my understanding of the manipulation of nature within the capitalist system, which is reminiscent of colonial empires. These cartoons are made in a fashion comparative to weaving. They are constructed through layering abstract imagery and layering thought. The red washy ground is spread on paper first, in response to thinking about the scored earth of the coupes being akin to the madder red dye used in Indian textiles and the manipulation of Indian textile designs at the hands of the British East India Company. Barnett (1995, p. 24) discusses this manipulation, noting that 'the British didn't want copies of British designs; they wanted something that fitted their image of what the Indians should have been making for themselves, exotic but "tasteful"'. Layered over the red wash ground I add an intricate abstract pattern language, like an array of threads or a viscerally loaded network of veins. This pattern language is derived from markings on collected logs. Making rubbings of these logs, I am reminded of Ashley Hay's (2002, p. 4) description of the remnant language of insects impressed in the timber: 'the scribbles make it easy to believe that there are stories hidden in the trees: if you could turn at the right moment or hold your head at the right angle, you'd catch their calligraphy resolving into words'. The resultant imagery is a rapid response that records my opposition to the mechanisms of the forestry industry within the rural landscape I inhabit. In Hay's (2002) exploration of the story of eucalypts and the identity of the Australian 'bush', she makes a poignant point about the vernacular of the trees. Often bundled together, described as 'gums', the site-specific idiosyncrasies of each genus become nullified by a myth of identity. This generalised myth of the trees creates a culture of remove, or a tendency to overlook the authentic value and beauty in encountering a eucalypt. In doing so, I believe it becomes easier to justify the attitude of use value, the trees seen as forests of product, not for what else they may hold for human experience.

These works are a record of my intention to use my practice as a platform for environmental commentary through which I portray commonly overlooked aspects of the natural landscape. These initial responses highlight a mode of using comparative analysis within the development of studio work, which is used continuously throughout this research project as a way of connecting seemingly disconnected areas of scholarship. I will expand on this later in this introduction, as this method is instrumental in developing the cultivated landscape as carpet concept.

**Figure 5 Hilary** Green, *Ground Specimen*, 2010, woven tapestry (wool, cotton), 24cm by 20cm

**Figure 6** Hilary Green, *Ground Specimen*, 2010, woven tapestry (wool, cotton), 19cm by 19cm

The *Ground Specimen* (2010–2011) series of tapestries (examples in Figs 5, 6) are made from interpreting the *Sad Red Ground* (2010) cartoons. Making these works demands lengthy process time (at least one month for most works in the series), allowing periods of sustained reflection and resonance alongside continued research. This series of works acts as a catalyst for refining scope within the research, solidifying my intentions for using this project to extend my visual art practice and using it as a record of plant conservation through depicting authentic representations of economic botany. The process of weaving the *Ground Specimen* (2010–2011) works is initially fuelled by the emotive response registered in making the *Sad Red Ground* (2010) cartoons. Additionally, research into Indian textiles influences decision making about the materiality of the cloth. Technical traditions such as using silk for the weft and a fine gauge are transposed from this research, whilst the imagery within the tapestries arose from translating the cartoons. These works are akin to fragments of cloth, medallions or roundels, remnant reminders of the cloth that once contained them. The lengthy duration of weaving the *Ground Specimen* (2010–2011) series provided time for reflection. These works became a catalyst for extending my practice through a departure from traditional weaving techniques. The translation of the gouache works into woven form at times became slavish in the process. Early works follow a cartoon directly (Figs 7, 8) with a high degree of likeness between cartoon and tapestry, as the series progresses I shift away from direct representation (Figs 9, 10). The commitment to depart from traditional norms in my making processes continues throughout this project, with subsequent developments discussed in ensuing

chapters. As a result of these initial works, using cartoons to aid the construction of images in woven form is abandoned, as I seek to extend my practice through incorporating broader, metaphorical translations of the woven form.

**Figure 7** Hilary Green, *Sad Red Ground,* 2010, gouache and pencil on watercolour paper, 12cm by 12cm

**Figure 8** Hilary Green, *Ground Specimen*, 2011, woven tapestry (wool, cotton), 14cm by 14cm

**Figure 9** Hilary Green, *Sad Red Ground*, 2010, gouache on paper, 10cm by 10cm

**Figure 10** Hilary Green, *Ground Specimen*, 2011, woven tapestry (wool, cotton), 10cm by 8cm

Imagery within my work is derived from interactions and observations of the natural landscape, influenced by memory and documented through collecting, photography and drawing.

Whilst researching the history of botany and botanical representation, the importance of plant collection and the subsequent redistribution of botanical specimens across the globe, dominated by the British Empire (Fara 2003) (Brockway 1979) (Musgrave & Musgrave 2000), impacts upon my mode of interacting with the landscape. As the native vegetation begins flowering profusely I go about collecting specimens in the fashion of scientific botanical analysis, to press and use in my work. Experiments with the collected native plant specimens (Fig. 11) attempt to integrate historical research with contemporary representations of botany. This engagement parallels an additional mode of botanical investigation used to stimulate studio content, the act of cultivating heirloom vegetable species from seed within my vegetable patch. I will discuss this at length in the following chapters; however, I am noting here the beginning of a process that is sustained throughout this research, which is referred to as 'fieldwork'. I define 'fieldwork' as a collaborative process of engaging with the act of cultivation; this involves propagation from seed, planting, maintenance, harvesting and seed saving.

**Figure 11** Hilary Green, installation experiment, 2011, mixed media, dimensions variable

Encountering the history of scientific botanical illustration and its inherent connection to empire I became aware of the vastness of this area of scholarship and that in researching botanical imperialism within the context of native vegetation there is a need to address the colonial landscape, a pre-established area of inquiry within the visual arts. As previously stated I do not propose this research as a sole interpretation of historical content, nor do I propose this research as a way of readdressing the colonial landscape in art.

**Figure 12** Rew Hanks, *STOP! There's no need to shoot the natives*, 2011, linocut, 75cm x 106cm

**Figure 13** Danie Mellor, *Postcards from the edge (in search of living curiosities)*, 2011, mixed media on paper, 152.5cm x 221.5cm

**Figure 14** James Tylor, *Terra Botanica I (Callistemon salignus),* 2015, Becquerel Daguerreotype, 4in x 5in

Practitioners such as Rew Hanks (Fig. 12), Danie Mellor (Fig. 13), James Tylor (Fig. 14) and many more draw on this area of scholarship, which is beyond the scope of this research project. Whilst I find a resonance with the social commentary in Hanks's *Stop! There's no need to shoot the natives* (2011) and Mellor's *Postcards from the edge (in search of living curiosities)* (2011), using recognisable elements of colonial culture, and Tylor's *Terra Botanica I (Callistemon salignus)* (2015), highlighting imperial methods of quantifying nature, I do not find a resonance with my intention to use my practice as a means of expressing land-based issues and environmental commentary. Casting initial experiments with native plant specimens aside, I am refining the scope of content within this project to further my commitment to fieldwork, the agricultural landscape that I inhabit and the representation of economic botany. As a consequence, I question how the history of plant selection influences the manner in which vegetable species are currently used, perceived and therefore represented in the capitalist world system, playing out in the rural landscape in which I live.

Aiming to contextualise the history of plant selection (Ambrosoli 1997), my research returns to the historical framework, coinciding with the same period of great significance in global trade formation within the Indian subcontinent. I arrive at new findings in historical textile research, these being the Indian Mughal 'flower' carpets from the 16th and 17th century (Figs 15 & 16) (Walker 1997) (Hali 2008). These carpets represent the cultivated landscape, in which 'the design of the carpet was the plan of a royal pleasure garden or paradise' (Conway 1913, p. 25). I am intrigued by these beautifully opulent weavings and reminded of my observations in Kashmir. I find a textile expression that technically synchronises with my textile techniques, and a representation of botany within the framework of empire that is at odds with my previous understanding of imperial activity and inheritance, seen in the above research on European nation states. Walker identifies that Mughal emperors possessed a 'love of and respect for the natural world, an interest in the historical record, an insistence on workmanship of the highest standard and, perhaps most important, a synthesis of Iranian, European, and Indian traditions' (1997 p. 25). It is within these research findings that the cultivated landscape as carpet concept unfolds.

**Figure 15** Carpet with flower pattern, Kashmir or Lahore, ca.1650, pashmina pile on silk foundation, 191cm x 116.8cm

**Figure 16** Carpet with flower pattern, Northern India, Kashmir or Lahore, 1650, pashmina pile on silk foundation, 426.7cm x 200.6cm

In developing the concept of the cultivated landscape as carpet I am using comparative analysis and metaphor to connect seemingly disconnected areas of scholarship that intersect this research. Aligned to Yi-Fu Tuan's (1993, p. 170) discussion of metaphor, my use of metaphor aims to evoke moods, atmospheres and ideas about the control, manipulation and environmental consequences of commercial cultivation. I am comparing and contrasting two distinct yet historically entangled empires, and equating this with my reading of the rural landscape in Northern Tasmania. I am comparing the activities and cultural inheritance of the British Empire—in which botany became a tool for the advancement of global dominion—to contemporary industrial agriculture. I also compare the Mughal Empire—in which a poetic connection to nature is expressed through botanical depictions in weaving and carpet—with my collaborative, ecologically focused, process of cultivating heirloom vegetables. I use metaphor in relation to carpet as a representation and document of my opposition to current methods of industrial agriculture in the context of the global food network. The materiality of carpet, a dense, heavy, easily transportable fabric, blanketing what lies beneath—historically associated with wealth and power—metaphorically coalesces with textiles, botany, ecology, empire and trade, resulting in perceiving the cultivated landscape as if it were a carpet of contemporary empire. I merge material interpretations of carpet with metaphorical interpretations of power structures inherent within the global food supply system that play out in the rural landscape I inhabit.

In Chapter 1 of this exegesis I discuss significant technical developments contained within making the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series of woven tapestries. These developments arise from expanding the concept of the cultivated landscape as carpet in which the intersection of botanical representation within science, art and fieldwork is compared to the centre and edge within the composition of the 'flower' carpets. Through this expansion I connect the composition of carpet with current relationships to cultivation in which heirloom vegetable species and ecological modes of cultivation are marginally represented.

In Chapter 2 I extend the discussion of centre/edge, focusing on the manipulation of cultivars as a result of global distribution networks. Botanical depictions arising from fieldwork are compared to commercial representations of economic botany through which I develop environmental commentary within the drawing series, *Monoculture medallion* (2011), *Cultivar carpet* (2011) and *Cellular states* (2012). These works further develop using abstract depictions and shifts in scale, through which codified botanical symbols become reminiscent of textile motifs.

An Interregnum marks the transformative life events of birth and death that punctuate this research project. In this section I discuss how these events contribute to the shifts in my thinking and making that are inextricably linked to the development of my experiential, sensorial connection to land revealed through the act of cultivation.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the seed drawings that are a result of the transformative experiences and connection to land that shifted from intellectual concepts to intuitive, fluid responses to cultivation as a transformational state of being. I reveal the potency and reverence of seed through creating an indexical trace of economic botany. The material approach discussed in this chapter, in which I make and embed plant materials in paper, encapsulates using my practice as a cultural record of plant conservation.

Throughout this exegesis I discuss my studio works in relation to defining an authentic representation of economic botany with the intention of creating a record of conservation. In this authentic representation I aim to present a multitude of components that influence our understanding and the representation of economic botany. Within this I discuss the shift from using botanical imagery as an object to illustrate intellectual concepts to representing economic botany as a transformative state of being contained within the process of cultivation. This project is a fluid journey that defies a static worldview, moving through discussions of object representation to more subject-led art practice in which I create a cultural record of place and plant conservation.

# Chapter one

## The cultivated landscape

The intersection of botanical representation within science, art and fieldwork compared to the botanical depictions and composition of the 17th century Mughal flower carpets will expand the concept of the cultivated landscape as carpet in this chapter. This discussion will metaphorically connect the motifs and relationship between centre and edge within the composition of carpets to current relationships with cultivation, in which heirloom vegetable species and ecological modes of cultivation are marginally represented. These connections initiated significant developments in my practice. These shifts are discussed in relation to the making of *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012), a woven tapestry series, which interprets embedding my collaborative interaction with cultivation within the rural landscape, creating a cultural record of species to stimulate environmental commentary about contemporary forms of botanical imperialism.

The pivotal role textiles play in cultural dissemination guided the making of the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) tapestry series and further established my interest in using this project as a cultural record of plant conservation, transmitting ideas about environmental impacts of current uses of economic botany. The legacy of cultural dissemination and inheritance resonates deeply within my practice, as Guy Abrahams, the CEO and co-founder of Climarte—a non-profit organisation promoting action on climate change through visual arts programs—says, 'Climarte wants art to rearrange our sense of reality about the state of this, our only planet [which is] perhaps the most critical moral issue of our time' (Abrahams 2015). The role of the visual arts in fostering critical debate about environmental issues, echoed in the seminal exhibition *In the Balance: Art for a Changing World* that was staged by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney in 2010, highlighted the urgency for this project to become a cultural record of environmental commentary. The preeminent French tapestry weaver Jean Lurcat suggests that contemporary tapestry is heavy with matter, meaning and intentions (Were, I 2011). This weight of intention influences the depiction of economic botany in the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series in which I aimed to accurately represent specimens from fieldwork, evoking wonder for commonly unseen forms of economic botany whilst indicating the stranglehold that contemporary frameworks have within the cultivated landscape of commercial agriculture.

Responding to the weighty intention of this project and identifying contemporary forms of botanical imperialism within commercial cultivation, I decided to cultivate heirloom vegetable species. The definition of heirloom species is variable, however, they are commonly recognised as open-pollinated varieties either handed down through generations or older than the advent of hybrid varieties (Seed Savers Exchange 2012; Organic Gardening 2016). In the first cultivation cycle of fieldwork I used the oldest seed varieties available, thus the fieldwork component of this research is a form of plant conservation and an active protest against the lack of diversity within

commercial cultivars available for propagation, and the loss of species due to the selection of varieties and traits for the purpose of industrial agriculture. David Burch et al. (1992, p. 266) describe the mechanisms of industrial agriculture by quoting Mooney (1979) who states:

> Hybrid seeds, for example, are designed to generate high yields and/or display characteristics desired by the processor/retailer, such as standard size, robustness in handling and long shelf life. Typically, this process of 'improvement' of seed varieties involves a narrowing of the genetic base of agriculture because of monocultural systems.

The manipulation of seed and plant genetics as an expression of botanical imperialism influences my practice and the development of the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series, in which imagery is derived from my fieldwork, an exhaustive field of enquiry that I will return to in Chapters 2 and 3. By conserving diversity within my fieldwork I am creating an oppositional empire of plants that are new to my eyes, creating a catalyst for wonder. The studio works for this project interpret the vital phases of cultivation: germination (emergence of the first binate leaves), pollination (flowering), fruit bearing (harvest) and seed collection, of which the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series depicts the germination and pollination phases (Fig. 17). The interpretation and depiction of these vital phases is facilitated by 'the cultivated landscape as carpet' concept, using the composition and botanical motifs in the Mughal flower carpets as a model for referencing the disparity between commercial agriculture and my economic botanical empire.

**Figure 17** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom*, 2011–2012, woven tapestry (wool, silk, cotton, plumb bobs), dimensions variable, installation view

The *Heirloom air loom* series merges material interpretations of carpet with metaphorical interpretations of power structures in the rural landscape I inhabit. This series related the centre and edge within the composition of the Mughal carpets (Figs 18, 19) to the relationship between my fieldwork and industrial agriculture. The industrial is sited in the centre and the heirloom species relegated to the edge, the border, in which the botanical motifs become of less importance than the dominant central depiction. Metaphorically connecting my fieldwork with the border/edge, the motifs within the borders of the flower carpets heavily influenced the method of depicting the heirloom specimens. Botanical depictions within the flower carpets are derived from natural history painting and book illustration from the Mughal Court, in combination with foreign texts containing botanical illustration such as European herbals and plant compendiums that were an adjunct to medicine and forerunners for the scientific analysis and illustration of plants (Gerard 1975, pp. v–vii).

**Figure 18** Fragmentary carpet with tree pattern, Northern India, Kashmir or Lahore, ca.1650, pashmina pile on silk foundation, 227.3cm x 191.8cm

**Figure 19** Fragmentary carpet with flower pattern, Northern India, Kashmir or Lahore, second half of 17th century, 172.7cm x 152.4cm, pashmina pile on silk foundation, detail

It has been suggested that the realistically depicted botanical motifs in the carpets may represent tulips, jasmines, red roses, lilies, ja'fani, irises, narcissus and poppies; whilst early carpets predominately respond to indigenous naturalism, over time cultural dissemination initiated stylisation, creating greater hybridisation within botanical motifs that made the plants harder to identify (Walker 1997, p. 86). Resonating with my intention to depict specimens from fieldwork as accurately and therefore authentically as possible and in response to the realism of botanical motifs within the carpets and their correlation to the discipline of botanical illustration, initial woven motifs in the *Heirloom air loom* series interpret depictions of seedling specimens drawn from life in the vegetable patch (Figs 20, 21).

**Figure 20** Hilary Green, *seedlings*, 2011, woven tapestry (wool, silk), dimensions variable, work in progress

**Figure 21** Hilary Green, *seedlings*, 2011, woven tapestry (wool, silk), dimensions variable, work in progress

This analytic approach to depicting botany, culturally inherited from scientific botanical analysis and illustration, is influential within the visual arts. I am enamoured by the precision in drafting prevalent in contemporary botanical illustration, demonstrated by the work of Lauren Black and Andrew Seward (Figs 22, 23) in which the image accurately replicates the object from which it is derived.

**Figure 22** Lauren Black, *Deciduous Beech – Nothofagus gunni*, watercolour and pencil on paper, detail

**Figure 23** Andrew Seward, *Study of adaptive ramification (Grevilea australis)*, 2012, pencil and ink on paper, 94cm x 125cm, detail

At this point in the development of the *Heirloom air loom* series I considered presenting the studio works in the format of a herbarium, a collection of preserved plants that are systematically categorised and stored as a reference for plant identification (Kew Royal Botanic Gardens 2011), as the realistic botanical weaving evoked the appearance of pressed plants. In considering this approach, I encountered the depiction of plants referencing elements of scientific botanical study creating symbols for communicating broader societal issues in the work of Ruth Johnstone and Janet Laurence. In *Weedicide* (2014) Johnstone conflates 20th-century nomenclature with weeds or exotic species such as dandelion (Fig. 24) to stimulate thinking about the status of weeds and by implication attitudes towards migration (Johnstone 2015). Akin to a labelled specimen in a herbarium, the museological nature of the imagery results from the sap dye fixing technique in combination with a formal text title above the botanical image. This allusion to scientific botanical analysis is used in Laurence's most recent practice to create environments acting as sanctuaries for contemplating and regenerating plant life (Fenner 2010, p. 64).

Her practice makes an immense contribution to coalescing art and science, using botany as subject matter to reference climate change and environmental issues. In *Waiting: A medicinal garden for ailing plants* (2010) and *Cellular gardens: Where breathing begins* (2005) (Fig. 25) Laurence creates scientific vitrines, containing real specimens and imagery of specimens combined with equipment, such as glass vials and tubes connecting plants, providing living support systems such as water. In conversation about these works, Laurence says she aims to provide a meditative space for ruminating on the layers of meaning in the work, a space between evidence and imagination (Fenner 2010, p. 67). The potential creation of a herbarium containing my fieldwork specimens could have aligned to this space between evidence and imagination through referencing scientific botanical analysis akin to the practitioners above; however, I diverged from this approach as I felt using recognisable elements of botanical representation would reproduce pre-established culturally inherited ways of perceiving plants. Aiming to evoke my wondrous response to and

finding new ways of depicting economic botany shifted my approach to depicting botanical specimens within subsequent works in the *Heirloom air loom* series, in which I no longer relied on translating a realistically drawn image into woven form.

**Figure 24** Ruth Johnstone, *Weedicide*, 2014, stencilling, printing and sap dye fixing

**Figure 25** Janet Laurence, *Cellular gardens: Where breathing begins*, 2005, stainless steel, mild steel, acrylic, blown glass, rainforest plants, dimensions variable**,** installation view

Subsequent development of imagery within the *Heirloom air loom* series was heavily influenced by stylisation and hybridisation of botanical motifs in the flower carpets, reminiscent of the fictionalised depictions of plants in the herbals (Gerard 1975, pp. v–vii) and early colonial studies of Indian botany (Ray 1992, pp. 1–11), in which shifting scale and combining specimens resulted in abstracted, fictionalised representations of the specimens interspersed with recognisable elements. To facilitate this shift in imagery I observed the specimens using a magnifying glass to reveal micro details and placed photographs documenting stages of plant development near the loom for observation whilst weaving. Woven predominately from the memory of observations, some of the imagery responds to maintaining recognisable botanical elements, recording species within established traditions (Figs 26, 27), whilst others respond to fantastical motifs within the carpets (Figs 28, 29). The lengthy duration of making shaped woven forms that float amongst the warp threads, a significant technical development in my studio practice that I will discuss later in this chapter, correlates to the duration of plant development within the pollination phase of cultivation. Thus, hybridisation of some botanical imagery within the series is also the result of evolving forms within specimens in the patch, as seen in Figure 28, in which the leek flower head is shown in differing stages of development.

**Figure 26** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom,* 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail

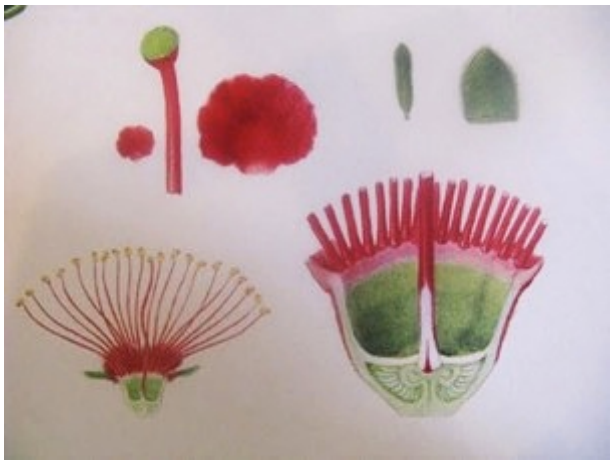

**Figure 27** Ferdinand Bauer, *Kunzea Baxteri*, ca.1801–1805, watercolour, 53cm x 35.5cm, detail

**Figure 28** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom,* 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail

**Figure 29** Fragment of a pashmina carpet with pattern of lattice and blossom, Northern India, Kashmir or Lahore, ca.1650, detail

The interplay between imagery within the double-sided works: rocket in combination with broad bean, leek in combination with parsnip, zucchini in combination with scarlet runner beans, and a hybrid representation of tomatoes, records shifts in the cultivation cycle as early flowering of the cold-soil planted vegetables give way to the flowering of warm and hot-soil planted vegetables.

Creating a catalyst for forging spatial relationships between the woven forms in the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series, this interplay developed an interest in presenting the specimens as living organisms, not preserved specimens contained for scientific analysis. The innovative technique I used to weave the double-sided lace-like botanical motifs embedded within verdant strips, seemingly hovering in the air yet tensioned to the ground with a plumb bob, inverts traditional processes and material relationships of tapestry weaving. Traditionally the construction of tapestry is reliant upon building on a horizontal foundation, weaving from bottom to top in order to make a flat, heavy fabric that is typically hung on walls. To make the shaped lace-like motifs I built areas of vertical foundation within the warps that were removed once the weaving was complete. This is illustrated in Figure 30 in which the work in progress shows areas of red foundation still intact.

**Figure 30** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom,* 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail

The materiality of this technique transforms tapestry from a flat surface into an object, presenting exciting potential to further extend the woven form through the interrelation of each side in combination with each work in relation to the whole as an installed work (Figs 17, 31).

Tapestry practitioners such as Magdalena Abakanowicz and Josep Grau-Garriga have previously challenged the flat surface of the tapestry medium by making spatial relationships between hanging woven forms. My approach for the *Heirloom air loom* series is an extension of previous practice within the medium of tapestry, in which the aesthetics of the *Heirloom air loom* series as

an art object is aligned to contemporary installation practice. Spatial relationships between the works in the series are reminiscent of works such as *Swamp Geometry* (2008) by Michala Dwyer (Fig. 32), *Garden* (2010) by Claire Morgan (Fig. 33), and *Sun-sneezers blow light bubbles* (2007–2008) by Ranjani Shettar (Fig. 34).

**Figure 31** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom,* 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail

**Figure32 Michala** Dwyer, *Swamp Geometry*, 2008, mixed media, dimensions variable, installation view

**Figure 33** Claire Morgan, *Garden*, 2010, Dunnocks (2, taxidermy), privet leaves, lead, nylon, acrylic, 220cm x 80cm x 80cm

These works ethereally elevate the subject matter through the composition of elements within individual objects. They are seen in relation to their position within the installation as a whole volume, creating tension between suspension and materiality to evoke atmospheres and wonderment. Similarly with *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012), the tension between the objects within the volume is used to activate an upward glance that evokes a state of reverence for the heirloom species depicted within the botanical motifs.

**Figure 34** Ranjani Shettar, *Sun-sneezers blow light bubbles,* 2007–2008, stainless steel, muslin, tamarind kernel paste, lacquer, dimensions variable, installation view

As with the Mughal carpets, in which the imagery responds to interactions within walled gardens, the vertical disposition of the work, which is relational to the scale of the human body, also reflects the act of cultivation, in which on hands and knees tending to cultivation, I am often looking up to

observe the botanical subject within the vegetable patch. The material relationships in *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) evoke a fragile and ghost-like atmosphere (Fig. 35) that allows the encroachment of metaphor to create meaning in the work. Fragments of manipulated botanical imagery combining authentic and fictional depictions are suspended within strips of varying green hues, alluding to the manipulation and loss of species resulting from the repetitive row upon row of commercial cultivation seen in the agricultural landscape.

**Figure 35** Hilary Green, *Heirloom air loom,* 2011–2012, wool and cotton on silk warp, dimensions variable, detail

As mentioned earlier, these tapestries are labour intensive. Similar to the *Ground Specimen* series (2010–2011) discussed in the introduction, there are moments of sustained reflection and reading within the process of making. Whilst the installation potential within the *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) series could have expanded with more works, covering more ground, exploring spatial composition to greater effect, I became cognisant of the need to re-contextualise the specimens themselves to allow the influence of trade to infiltrate studio works. In subsequent studio works in this project I seek to extend my practice through incorporating broader, metaphorical translations of carpet and the woven form through drawing mediums. In Chapters 2 and 3 I will discuss the progression toward integrating and extending the woven medium within my drawing practice, and the extension of using metaphor to convey the cultivated landscape as carpet concept in relation to the capitalist world system and global food network.

# Chapter 2

## Empire

The metaphor of carpet, a heavy, easily transportable fabric that blankets what lies underneath takes predominance in this chapter, in which I merge material interpretations of carpet with metaphorical interpretations of power structures in the rural landscape I inhabit. The use of this metaphor responded to the contrasting methods of cultivation within the site of my inquiry, expressed as empires. I compared fieldwork—small scale, ecologically focused production of heirloom vegetables—to ecologically malign swathes of corporate controlled commercial mono-cropping agriculture. The notions of centre and edge and authentic representation of economic botany discussed in Chapter 1 are re-contextualised here to highlight the implications of global capitalist-led cultivation stemming from inherited relationships to economic botany established through plantation ecologies of historical nation state empires (Brockway 1983). The studio works became responsive to the influence of trade upon forms of economic botany through the use of abstract codified symbols and metaphorical connections between carpet and drawing, positioned alongside practitioners who use commercial forms of economic botany to highlight the urgency of engaging with a critique of the relationship between human activity and cultivation.

**Figure 36** Hilary Green, *Monoculture Medallion*, 2011, gouache and lead pencil on watercolour paper, 74cm x 63cm

**Figure 37** Hilary Green, *Cultivar Carpet*, 2011, gouache and lead pencil on watercolour paper, 74cm x 63cm

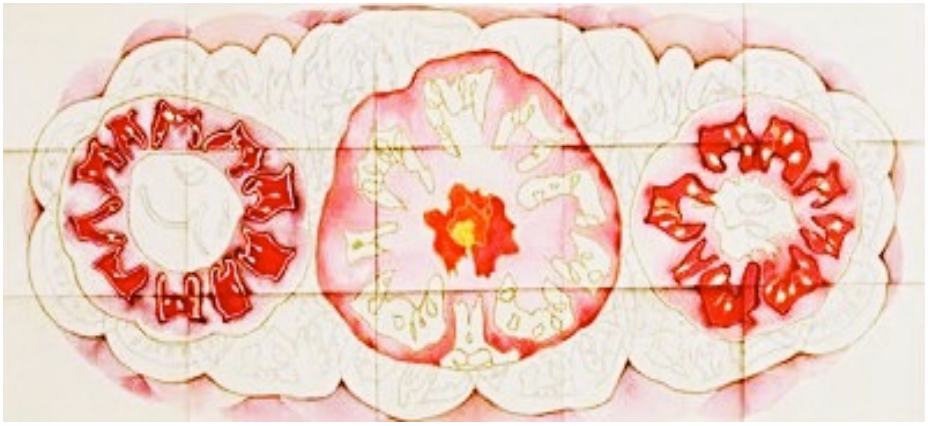

**Figure 38** Hilary Green, *Cellular States*, 2012, gouache and lead pencil on paper, 63cm x 148.5cm

The use of the term 'empire' so far in this exegesis has been associated with the historical relationship between people and cultivation; the artworks discussed in this chapter express the notion of empire in relation to contemporary cultivation and human activity. *Monoculture Medallion* (2011) (Fig. 36), *Cultivar Carpet* (2011) (Fig. 37) *and Cellular States* (2011) (Fig. 38) locate my fieldwork by comparing and contrasting it with broader cultivation methods influenced by global food supply networks. In identifying two predominant modes of cultivation within my site, my collaboration with cultivation through fieldwork, and the commercial mono-cropping that looms beyond my patch, I aimed to reveal, as Brockway (1979) states, that economic botany and our current relationship with cultivation reveals imperial intent.

> Today the multinational corporation is the characteristic instrument of neo-colonialist expansion in the world system, and it has so many sources of scientific information—its own internal organs of research and development, private research firms, the universities, the government, agencies—that botanic gardens are less important in this respect than formerly. Indeed, many botanic gardens have turned to the preservation of world ecology as their major research area (Brockway 1979, p. 10).

In her acclaimed book, *Science and Colonial Expansion*, Brockway (1979) discusses networks of global influence within the relationship between empire, science and botany. She suggests that the capitalist world system has enabled the transferral of power from nation states—expressed here in the form of botanic gardens that supported colonial plantation ecologies—to corporate entities. 'Globalization in short, consolidated the imperialist dominators and deepened the submission of peripheral capitalisms' (Boron 2005, p. 4). Corporate power in agribusiness has:

> …dramatically altered the social organisation of agriculture and changed the nature and source of agricultural inputs, the production technologies employed, the character and types of crops grown, the level of off-farm processing of agricultural produce, and the marketing of agricultural products (Burch, Rickson & Annels 1992, p. 259).


**Figure 39** Fiona Hall, *Leaf litter: Dioscored esculenta – air potato* 2000–03, gouache on international currency, dimensions variable

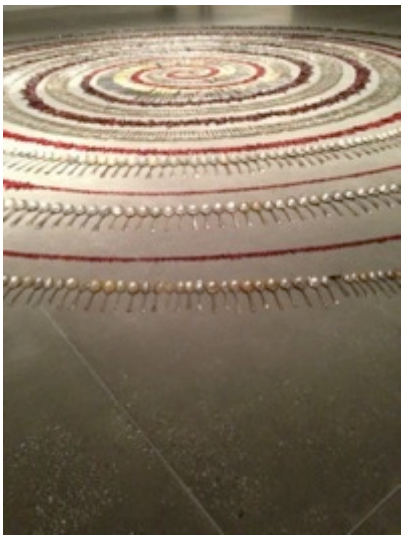

**Figure 40** Simryn Gill, *Forking Tongues*, 1992, assorted cutlery and dried chillies, dimensions variable

The intrinsic link between botany and trade, paying reference to inherited attitudes to cultivation and frameworks of power resulting from colonial plantation ecologies (Henzell 2007) is also depicted in the works *Leaf litter* (1999–2003) (Fig. 39) and *When my boat comes in* (2002–) by the preeminent Australian artist Fiona Hall. In these works Hall intricately renders botanical imagery on banknotes, 'narratives of discovery, trade, honest toil and dreams of prosperity stream across the notes: tidal movements of goods and capital, entire populations in their wake' (O'Brien 2007, p. 35). Hall's practice is of outstanding significance to delineating the impacts of human activity upon botany, seen in these works in which she satirises our understanding of relationships with power and value by using ubiquitous cultural objects—currency and botany. Similarly, *Forking Tongues* (1992) by Simryn Gill (Fig. 40) subverts the symbology of cultural objects by installing silver cutlery and chillies on the floor of the gallery space to make commentary about histories of passage and the idea of something foreign becoming local (Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art, 2014). Aligned to these approaches, I chose to depict specimens of a ubiquitous object of economic botany, the tomato (Fig. 41), as being symbolic of imperial intent of power relations and value within contemporary cultivation.

Interpreting the vital phases of cultivation in this project, drawings responded to the fruit bearing and harvest stage as product. The most commonly encountered forms of economic botany are the products of agriculture, prioritised through national supermarket chains and wholly dictated by the corporate denominator and requirements of supply chains—evidenced in the OECD manuals on produce standard requirements (OECD 2000).

**Figure 41** Hilary Green, *Monoculture Medallion*, 2011, gouache and lead pencil on watercolour paper, detail

Market forces transform the act of cultivation, as Reeve (1992, p. 209) states:

> …agriculture has shifted from being a system that used the culturally transmitted wisdom of the agrarian class to transform solar energy into agricultural output to a system dependent on the techno-industrial complex that consumes and dissipates materials and fossil fuel energy and, in the process, transforms a small part into agricultural output (Reeve 1992, p. 209).

This prerogative of prioritising the capitalist market became evident whilst attending a conference on the future of food staged by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association in 2010. In contrast to the methods of cultivation outlined above, my fieldwork is dictated largely by accumulating knowledge about plant behaviour through an intuitive collaboration with cultivation within the patch, in which I aim to redress the capitalist influences on cultivation. Whilst manuals (Blazey & Varkulevicius 2006; Soloman 2010) and shared conversational wisdom of other cultivators have guided cultivation techniques, ultimately, I dictate the decisions about what is grown, how and when. This project embodies six cycles of cultivation in two locations within the same district in rural Northern Tasmania (Fig. 42) through which germinating heirloom seeds, planting seedlings, harvesting produce and saving seed is registered as a cultural document of species, place and time, a process that is atypical of the representation of economic botany within the visual arts. I have created my own empire of cultivation distinguished from capitalist-led commercial cultivation by reducing environmental impacts—typified by promoting diversity and replacing chemical inputs with companion planting—and maintaining my cultural right to the stewardship of plants. Through comparing and contrasting these opposing empires the metaphor of carpet shifted from representing empire through stylistic and compositional elements within flower carpets to representing corporate empires as an easily transportable, transforming carpet,

'able to traverse the globe for economic, political and ecological reasons; companies have a national and international horizon' (Burch, Rickson and Annels 1992, p. 269).

**Figure 42** Mixed cropping in the patch 2010, Golden Valley, Tasmania

The tomatoes in these works are representative of the fieldwork process and are emblematic of botanical specimens at large, transformed through the manipulation of germplasm and transportation within local, national and global geographies. Forms of economic botany exist rurally as the cultivation of crops, and are transformed within the urban landscape as homogeneous, uniform-in-appearance products. The established notions of between centre and edge became more fluid across these works, indicative of shifts in rural (edge) and urban (centre) landscapes and the accompanying global food distribution networks.

**Figure 43** Hilary Green, *Cultivar Carpet* (detail), 2011, gouache and lead pencil on watercolour paper, dimensions variable

The juxtaposition of rectilinear rhythms within composition, representative of commercial cultivation, and organic imagery, representative of my fieldwork, combined with a codified system of abstracted motifs and colours such as reds, royal blue and gold became indicative of this new

inference placed on empire, power and wealth. The expanded notion of empire, a carpet that blankets and moves, and notions of centre and edge aided the development of abstraction within my drawing process. The emblematic nature of the dissected tomato motifs and networks, highlighted through shifting scale within imagery, communicate my interpretation of the interaction between humans, plant modification and commodification (Fig. 43).

**Figure 44** Fiona Hall, *Cash Crop*, 1998–1999, carved soap, painted banknotes, vitrine, 115cm × 130cm × 55cm vitrine dimensions, detail

The intersection between humans, plant modification and commodification is also alluded to in Fiona Hall's work *Cash Crop* (1998–1999) (Fig. 44). In this work, resulting from the study of living specimens at Mount Coot-tha Botanic Gardens (Ewington 2005, p. 184), Hall created a vitrine containing recognisable specimens of economic botany carved from soap. Placed on glass shelves, the soap specimens are labelled with economic terminology: for example, liquid asset, profit margin, budget surplus. Hovering above paintings of leaf specimens on banknotes, Hall weaves 'elements from different directions to create a new set of commentaries about the world we inhabit' (Webb 2007, p. 12). Akin to other visual arts practitioners discussed in this exegesis, who critique our relationship to botany and the impacts of human activity upon nature, Hall's institutional/museological format maintains familiarity within the representation of botany, from which my own studio practice diverges.

In the process of harvesting a diversity of form is revealed, its authenticity supressed by the requirements of the global food network and commercial structures within which we receive vegetable produce, and this compelled me to revisit within my practice homogenous representations of economic botany and the decline of varieties. The tomato portraits in *Monoculture Medallion* (2011) (Fig. 41) responded to the transformation of colour and character in the specimens during storage; after a cool summer season the tomatoes are harvested green and stored in boxes nestled amongst woollen fleece, unlike their commercial counterparts that are commonly sprayed with ethylene gas to ripen the fruit. Imagery in the drawn works is derived

from numerous tomato varieties that have been cultivated throughout the world for centuries; the Gregori Altai that comes from the Altai Mountains, on the border of Russia and China, is a favourite. For a plant that originated in Peru, it is astounding that the tomato has peregrinated across the globe, and I wonder about the embedding of place within the DNA of the plant and whose hands have cultivated and preserved the seed. Tomatoes have risen from potential obscurity, by chance, through the obsession of plant breeders, cultivated and continually manipulated to arrive at the types of tomatoes we consume today. Estabrook's *Tomatoland* (2011) is a fascinating account of how a wild, virtually inedible plant has been transformed successively into a deliciously sweet yet acid fleshy fruit, and now one of the blandest, most uniform, 'products' in the produce section of supermarkets; 'These are bred for shelf life and shipping, certainly not for taste' (Blazey & Varkulevicius, 2006, p. 80). The modern tomato is testament to the relentless relationship of manipulation between humans and botany. They were the first commercially available genetically modified crop, consequently becoming symbols for the debate surrounding genetically modified organisms (GMO Compass 2006). The debate surrounding genetically modified food crops is a crucial aspect of the relationship between humans and cultivation, the scope of which is too large for this project, in which I prioritise the insidious trace of agriculture upon the natural landscape, in the form of environmental degradation due to pesticides and herbicides, combined with the consequences of processing, packaging and transportation and heinous social repercussions, such as slavery.

Ken and Julia Yonetani's works *Still Life: The Food Bowl* (2011), *The Last Supper* (2014) and *The Last Suppermarket* (2014) present themes of commercial cultivation and its environmental degradation of agricultural landscapes. Drawing upon still life traditions, sculpted food produce is made from salt extracted from the Murray Darling river basin. These works comment on unsustainable agricultural practices focusing on increasing salinity as a concerning environmental issue. Salt becomes a metaphor for the rise and fall of civilisations and the issues of environmental decline, climate change and food security that face us on a global scale today (Yonetani & Yonetani 2016a). The installation *The Last Suppermarket* (2014) (Fig. 45) a life-size supermarket containing shelves of salt produce is of particular interest. The immersive nature of the sterile white space containing immaculately crafted sculptures of economic botany evokes an unnerving atmosphere that emulates the imperial intent within capitalist-led cultivation and the transformation of living species into homogenous, uniform products. The representation of economic botany in the Yonetanis' work, connecting commodification with a still life aesthetic, is similar in approach to American photographer Tanya Marcuse who documented wax vegetable models at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, New York. The wax models possess titles such as *100% Profit*, *Perfection*, *Bountiful* and *Refugee,* which indicate the agricultural imperative and the commodification of plant specimens (Marcuse 2010) (Fig. 46). These works are critical depictions of commonly encountered forms of economic botany.

**Figure 45** Ken and Julia Yonetani, *The Last Suppermarket*, 2014, Murray River salt, 9m x 0.72m x 1.22m, detail


**Figure 46** Tanya Marcuse, *Refugee*, digital photograph, 2009, 58.4cm x 71.1cm

Unlike the work of Ken and Julia Yonetani and Tanya Marcuse, my depiction of tomato specimens in *Monoculture Medallion* (2011) (Fig. 36), *Cultivar Carpet* (2011) (Fig. 37) *and Cellular States* (2011) (Fig. 38) re-presents unfamiliar forms of economic botany to evoke wonder, by presenting commonly unseen aspects of these forms as authentic depictions. In these works, micro details of seeds encased in the flesh of dissected tomatoes are used as a pattern language. I am continually amazed how the unfolding flower is reflected in the way the form of flesh builds around the fertilised flower (Fig. 47), indicative of the object as a transforming state rather than a homogenous static economic object. Shifts in scale leading to abstraction within imagery relate to the dynamics of manipulation of germplasm and transportation/transformation of produce between rural edge and urban centre landscapes. Although unintended, these works are cartographic in nature, with the grid lines of the tiled sheets of paper recalling fold creases on an open map, however, the composition also relates to carpet and is indicative of forming the trajectory within studio work to translate the woven form through metaphor expressed in drawing mediums.

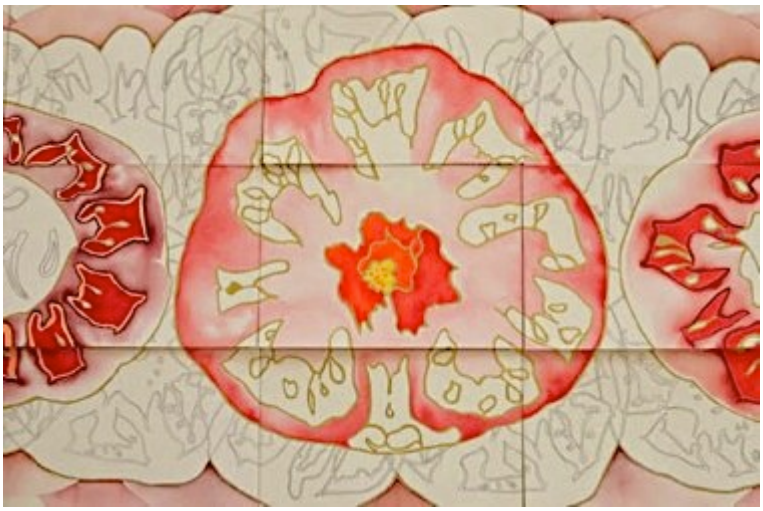

**Figure 47** Hilary Green, *Cellular States*, 2012, gouache and lead pencil on watercolour paper, detail

Responding to an integral aspect of understanding our current relationships with cultivation, the drawn works discussed in this chapter revealed imperial intent through the intrinsic connection between botany and trade. They can be seen as catalysts for developing subsequent works in this project, as the objectified character of the tomato depictions reinforced my interest in representing the specimens as living plants, not contained by referencing systems of human culture. Throughout this project the studio works have been contained by definitions and imposed intellectual structures to metaphorically connect notions of carpet and empire to express my interpretation of the cultivated landscape that I inhabit. In the Interregnum and Chapter 3 I expand on the transformations in thinking and making that shifted the studio works from intellectual constraints toward fluid, intuitive responses to the state of being contained within the cultivation process.

## Interregnum

The duration of this project has been prolonged, having been punctuated by two inextricably linked yet contrasting life events, birth and death, that have necessitated breaks from studio work and this project at large.

**Figure 48** Hilary Green, *Saint Germinate,* 2012, digital photograph, dimensions variable

Birth and death are the inescapably momentous events that underpin the life cycle for living organisms. Having become viscerally aware of the life forces of gestation, birth and death as experienced in the birth of my son and death of my mother, I feel my recognition of these cycles within plants has become deeply embedded in my senses. The impact of having become a mother and having lost a mother has been immensely, ineffably profound and impacting, creating unforeseen transformations in my thinking, approach to making and connections to land. Throughout these moments of punctuation there has been one constant, consistent thread of research that has remained active, that being fieldwork, my collaboration with cultivation.

The experiential, sensorial recognition that comes from the fieldwork has severed the intellectual distinction between the plants I cultivate and myself. In the *Saint Germinate* images (Figs 48, 49) I place my gestating self in the cultivated landscape, one image a scene of verdant abundance, the other a scene of desolation. Held aloft, one of the *Heirloom air loom* tapestries is draped across my body, becoming part of me, yet seemingly distinct from myself. These images precede the experiences of birth and death and the pauses in which I immerse myself in cultivation, however, they foreshadow a transformation in thinking and are experiments in attempting to make

connections between human and plant life cycles and the role I play in championing the vital importance of engaging with cultivation.

**Figure 49** Hilary Green, *Saint Germinate II*, 2012, digital photograph, dimensions variable

Intellectual thinking, environmental concerns, the bounded nature of carpet and the bounded nature of control within commercial cultivation directed the nature of my practice before these life events. As a consequence of experiencing birth and death and the duration of numerous plant life cycles within the cultivation process, the catalysts for studio work have been reversed. As a consequence, I am responding on an intuitive, experiential and poetic level, in which the intentions about land-based issues remain but no longer act as the point of agency—or reason—in my approach to expressing the act of cultivation.

*The Anatomy of Spring* (Fig. 50) is a tapestry made for the Group Exchange exhibition (the 2nd Tamworth Textile Triennial, one of Australia's preeminent curated textiles exhibitions). This work sits parallel to this research project and was made during one of the pauses from my candidature. The work addresses similar themes to this research, however, it was made without a specific intention for the final image. I mention this work here as it forms a pivotal moment in my practice, where an intuitive response to cultivation is made. By combining micro details from botanical specimens observed during spring, I intuitively responded to pollination, flowering and the anatomical character of plants as fertile vessels. The abstract image that results from my observations can be seen also as an intuitive response to becoming a mother and the fecundity of the female body. Whilst this is a seemingly tangible connection to make, it certainly was not an

intention. *The Anatomy of Spring* is an expression of the initial transformations in my thinking, where I begin to observe the human life cycle as linked to that of the botanical life cycle.
This work forms an important adjunct to this project, providing the opportunity to further develop abstract imagery and intuitive responses.

The immersive experience of cultivation begins to steer my art making, as does the significance of engaging with the act of cultivation to sustain myself. Sustenance comes in the form of food, but also in the form of feeling a deep connection to life forces springing from the act of cultivation. Pause and transformation facilitated the deepening of my connection to land through which my art making and thinking processes shifted to become intrinsically linked to fluid, intuitive responses to cultivation, comprising networks of interconnected systems, akin to woven fabric. Seed, the potent and revered vessel crucial to cultivation and my sensorial experiential connection to land initiates significant developments within my studio work. Highly influenced by the pivotal experiences of life and death between practising, subsequent drawings that are discussed in Chapter 3 evoke the transformational state of being, encapsulated within making, cultivation and life cycles contained within this project.

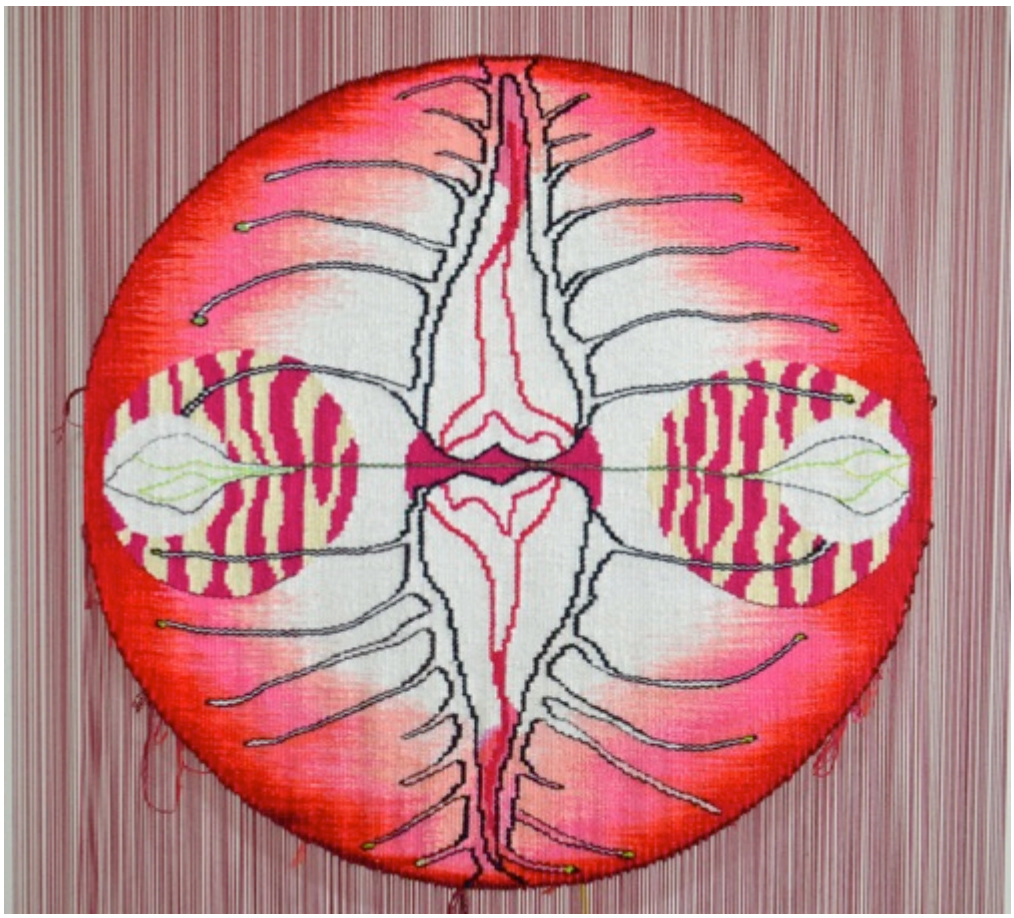

**Figure 50** Hilary Green, *The Anatomy of Spring*, 2014, woven tapestry (wool, cotton on cotton seine twine), 50cm x 50cm

# Chapter 3

## Seed

It's late summer, elongated daylight and hot temperatures heat the soil, creating rapid shifts in the patch. Gluts of produce swell and ripen, whilst flower stems tower, projecting toward the sky, setting seed. There is a sense of vertical expansion, above and below the soil, and there is a sense of transformation and movement as the plants reproduce themselves, embedding DNA.

I begin ruminating about seed.

High overhead, a bird of prey gliding through the valley is chorused by wrens and ravens, I look toward the sky. Perfume emanating from pollen intensifies in the midday heat, becomes a sonic scape as bees throng and hum. Pulling weeds, touching soil, disturbing terrestrial creatures, birds eager to pick over newly unfurled ground dance around me and I look toward the earth. Shifting seasons transform colour, marking the life cycle of plants. Enveloped by weather, warm sun, cold frost, driving wind and rain, daily interactions within the patch sustain a sensorial euphoric connection to land.

I keep ruminating about seed; I begin to ruminate about site.

Emerging unexpectedly, seeds lying dormant in the ground germinate a link between past and present, site and place. Plants setting seed disperse networks that hurtle toward the future. Recalled moments whilst cultivating compact and elongate my sense of time; season after season, one folds into another as memories of observations and interactions accumulate. In the repetition of life cycles, birth and death become one and the same, generational shifts unfold the anticipated object.

I keep ruminating about seed, site and place; I begin to ruminate about the fluid nature of time.

There is a distinction between my immersive relationship with nature in the rural landscape and the urban environment in which nature is an externalised conception. Harvesting food maintains my strong connection to land. With residual traces of earth left on vegetables I am reminded that the plants I consume are living organisms, firmly embedded in the place where they are grown. My deep connection to land is attuned to a myriad of networks of interconnected systems within the patch, reminding me of the network of systems that distribute food products locally, nationally and globally. This distinction reveals two empires of economic botanical representation: my economic botanical empire that responds to a fluid, sensorial and experiential connection to place, and commercial cultivation whose networks of distribution sever a connection to place through objectifying nature.

I keep ruminating about seed, place and the fluidity of time; I begin ruminating about the connection between economic botany, centre and edge.

In this chapter I continue to evoke moods, atmospheres and ideas, focusing on seed as the vital object in the cultivation process and as a vessel that contains both a potent material and metaphorical character. As a material vessel, seed maintains our future ability to provide sustenance as a food source; containing great potency for cultural inheritance as embedded within it is a genetic response to place. Metaphorically the word 'seed' refers to the inception of an idea in one's mind. 'Seed' is a concept related to time: you may seed an idea—something for reaping in the future, something that has potential, a perceived future trajectory. Being heavily influenced by transformative life events—beginnings and endings—my art making and thinking processes during this project have not been static. Likewise, important concepts formulated early on in this exegesis have shifted. The bounded notion of the 'cultivated landscape as carpet' described in Chapter 1 and 2 was formed by intellectual notions of the authentic as well as economic botanical representations found in art, science and commerce. Now I move to illustrate the process of redefining the 'cultivated landscape as carpet', situating it as a highly responsive, intuitive, fluid and transformative concept.

**Figure 51** Pashmina carpet with niche and flower design, Northern India, Kashmir or Lahore, ca.1630–40, pashmina on silk foundation, 157cm x 102cm

The final studio work series for this project began constrained with the imposed intellectualised structure of the flower carpets in mind. Having established the cultivated landscape as carpet concept and as a mode of relating fieldwork to broader concerns about commercial cultivation, initial making is bound by transferring stylistic approaches in the flower carpets to the ground that I cultivate. Niche carpets are a style of flower carpet comprising a large botanical motif contained

by a niche structure defined by borders (Fig. 51). The dominance of the realistically depicted botanical motif in the carpet provides an important focal point that for me evokes a state of authenticity and reverence.

Initially I chose to interpret this style of carpet to create a link between the niche carpets and the state of reverence that I place upon heirloom seeds. The drawing that resulted from transposing niche carpet formats is a large-scale work in which a network of fluid lines emanate from a seed bank, forming a niche. This work is pivotal as it initiated significant developments in my practice, that I will elucidate in the following discussion, and created a shift away from the intellectual and compositional constraints of the previous studio work.

**Figure 52** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2015,
plant material and graphite on paper, 172cm x 90.5cm

Symbolic in this work is the realisation that 'seed' contains networks of interconnected systems and fluid time distilled in its DNA, which forms a representation of the cultivation process, dormant, within (Fig. 52). This idea—the trace of cultivation held within seed—starts to dominate in my thinking. The concept of cultivated landscape as carpet shifts from an intellectualised one—where fieldwork is compared to imperial notions within commercial cultivation—toward a fluid, intuitive response comprising networks of interconnected systems, akin to woven fabric through which cultivation is seen as a transformative state of being.

The way I conduct fieldwork has become intrinsically connected to the potency of seed. This project began using seed from heirloom species, revered because of their diversity, unique

character, creating a distinction from homogenous commercial cultivation, and the cultural value they contain due to the role they play in maintaining our survival through providing food and resources. Heirloom seeds also provide a connection to place and time beyond the present, when planted seeds embed information from the parent plant, a distilled biotic scape from another place contained within. During my interaction with cultivation I have become increasingly interested in saving seed, creating my own heirloom by ensuring the seed I use is highly acclimatised to the place in which it grows. This interest has dictated the way in which I cultivate, I have become an advocate of enabling plants to complete their full life cycle, promoting their ability to self-seed.

Fieldwork and my attitude toward cultivation are closely aligned with the current world-view of seed activists such as Vandana Shiva (1997) and the Seed Savers Exchange (2012 amongst others. As outlined in the *Manifesto on the future of seed,* produced by the International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture:

> …agricultural policies aimed to promote and implement global diversity of seed cultivars must support the development and the spreading of agricultural systems based on an holistic approach, where human, crop, animal, microbial biodiversity is an indispensable tool to reduce external inputs, to increase productivity efficiency and reach sustainability (Shiva 2007, p. 18).

The cultural value and rights of seed as an object of economic botany is a contested area of debate. Seed activists promote biodiversity through maintaining the right to hold stewardship of seeds as a cultural imperative, on which our survival is dependent, whilst proponents of the biotechnology industry maintain that technological intervention in the DNA of seeds is the future of global food supply (Folger 2014). In 'Simulating mother nature, industrializing agriculture', Les Levidow identifies that 'the prospect of a genetically engineered future evokes hopes and fears for ultimate human control over nature' (1996, p. 55). To further illustrate this notion of empire, Levidow (1996, pp. 159–160) cites Beck (1992) who states that:

> …science presupposes a clear boundary between its objects of study (the problem 'out there') and itself (the solution); science objectifies errors as external problems: 'Wild uncomprehended nature and the unbroken compulsions of tradition are "to blame" for the sicknesses, crises and catastrophes from which people suffer'.

Resulting from a collaborative process of stewardship, the idea of ultimate human control over nature is estranged from fieldwork, in which I have become indistinguishable from the dynamic life cycle of plants and the revered potency of seed. Perceiving seed as a vital vessel that contains a trace of the cultivation process, combined with positioning my approach to practice outside established trajectories within the visual arts, has forged transformation in my work and key concepts of this research. In the seed drawings (Fig. 53) I captured the dynamism of my relationship with cultivation and the fluid nature of time dormant within seed by intuitively

responding to composition and abstraction arising from the drawing process, instead of depicting recognisable forms of economic botany.

My response to the unfolding and surprising nature of these works is performative: the fluid nature of time and action is captured as if within seed, a dormant sensorial experience. Through redefining the 'cultivated landscape as carpet' concept, the depiction of economic botany responds to ground, the earth that contains the fluidity of cultivation. Thus, the notion of carpet became embedded within a language of place and the fieldwork location instead of in comparison to the culture of humanity that objectifies relationships to nature.

**Figure 53** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2015,
plant material and graphite on paper, 76cm x 56cm

Indicative of communicating concepts about externalised nature, the objectification of economic botany is exemplified in *Sustenance* (2010) by Lauren Berkowitz (Fig. 54) and *Organic Practice* (2009) by Emily Floyd (Fig. 55). In Berkowitz's Physic Garden, plants are presented as static sterile objects, despite continual change as the plants grow for the duration of display, placed under grow lamps, bounded by pots on a table plinth. The indigenous food species and medicinal plants selected by Berkowitz hold cultural significance (Berkowitz 2010), yet somehow this becomes mute because of the approach to displaying the specimens. The bounded, objectified character of the plants is echoed in Floyd's work, in which sculpted generic wooden vegetable forms are contained within commercial produce boxes alongside wooden strips inscribed with the URLs of websites dedicated to online collectivism and environmentalism (Kent 2010, p. 36). The use of produce boxes and a non-descriptive representation of vegetable forms bind economic botany to established interactions with produce, reminiscent of homogeneous products in supermarkets.

Indicative of urbanisation and the alienating disjunct between ourselves as urban dwellers and the practice of cultivation, these works are static; they are reflective and not reflexive and therefore, unresponsive to the burgeoning need to find alternative solutions to the problems within economic botany—reiterations of established representations of the relationship between humanity and nature referenced in discussions in Chapters 1 and 2.

The seed drawings position my practice outside of urban culture in which the externalisation of nature constrains depictions of economic botany within intellectualised notions. The preeminent ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood is a critic of rationalistic, intellectualised relationships between humans and nature, in which nature is measured through use value, of lesser importance than the human race (Bird Rose 2013; Plumwood 2009). Mulligan and Hill (2001, pp. 279–280) affirm this view by quoting Plumwood (1993) as saying 'we see ourselves as independent users of passive nature that we are not part of. We live in "culture" and other-things —wild ones—"live in nature". We think we can manipulate nature from outside, from a distance'. Earlier in this research I had been concerned with the disparity between my immersion in nature in comparison to how 'culture' manipulates nature from the outside. This concern subsided as a result of redefining the 'cultivated landscape as carpet concept', dissolving previously established notions of centre and edge used as a compositional device.

**Figure 54** Lauren Berkowitz, *Sustenance*, 2010, medicinal and edible plants, 60cm x 480cm x 60cm

**Figure 55** Emily Floyd, *Organic Practice*, 2009, wooden sculptures (kota wood, huon pine, beechwood, ancient New Zealand kauri), cardboard presentation box, 60cm x 61cm x 40cm

**Figure 56** Dried seed heads, 2014–2015, dimensions variable

In seeking to shift away from intellectual constraints within my representation of economic botany, I brought plant materials into my making processes. The seed drawings began with collecting and drying seed heads from the patch (Fig. 56). Interacting with seed dispersal is a wondrously unpredictable experience; seedlings emerge in close and extended proximity to the parent plant, creating areas of dense carpeting, usually around the plant, and clusters of varying numbers usually in areas away from the plant. Sometimes seemingly random seedlings will emerge in completely unexpected places, seeds travel, in distance and in time, seeds can lie dormant in soil for great periods of time, choosing to germinate when the opportunity or conditions arise: the oldest seed known to germinate is reputed as being 2000 years old (Silvertown 2009, p. 113).

The dried seed heads are potent material objects expressive of the dynamic action of seed dispersal. In the 'seed drawing' series, seeds revealed through graphite rendering appear floating as if in mid flight (Fig. 57) whilst others are revealed in dense clusters, as seen in Figure 58. Moments of action and repose within mark making speak of seed dispersal as indicators of the fluidity of time.

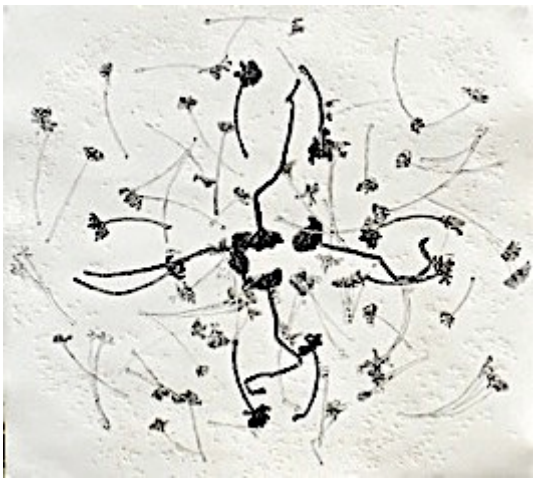

**Figure 57** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2015,
plant material and graphite on paper, 67cm x 57cm

**Figure 58** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2015,
plant material and graphite on paper, 61cm x 57cm

Through making and embedding materials in the work I formed a new relationship with economic botany, to which I respond intuitively within the making process. No longer reliant on using a static depiction of an object to communicate the themes in this research, I make imagery that reflects a state of being in the place where cultivation occurs. Using an etching printing press, the seed heads were impressed into paper and fibrous matter, oil stains, smells and soil remnants remain as a textural shadow impression, an indexical trace of the plant. This material approach can be likened to Chris De Rosa's printed seaweed specimen works such as *Beatrice* (2014) (Fig. 59) in which layered processes and textural treatment of paper is integral to the work. Textural treatment such

as cut-out sections of paper construct a relationship with the gallery space in which the wall becomes the ground for the image, unlike the seed drawings that are intended to be displayed on the gallery floor, in which the impressed trace on paper forms the ground for imagery. De Rosa uses vivid colour and fragments of drawn specimens to reveal the character of the plants as being strange or otherly (De Rosa 2015).

**Figure 59** Chris De Rosa, *Beatrice*, 2014, etching, digital inkjet, stencil, dimensions variable

**Figure 60** Hilary Green, green seed experiment, 2015, plant matter on paper, dimensions variable

Having experimented with green seed heads (Fig. 60), I made the decision to restrict colour to grey scale, revealing their character as a state of being, an action rather than an object evoking traditions of scientific botanical analysis exemplified by Ruth Johnstone's work as discussed in Chapter 1 (Fig. 24). The grey lead speaks to the weight of ground, and the lightness of air, a sense of being in between that captures the character of seed as a transforming state. Julie Mehretu's work *Middle grey* (2007–2009) (Fig. 61) employs the in-between space of grey to dramatic effect, reminiscent of the seed drawings. In conversation with Sarah Tutton (2010, p. 79) she says, 'these works live in that middle space, not on the surface with the drawing, and not inside the surface in the ground, but right in-between that space where the erased marks and the surface coalesce—the space in-between where painting happens'.

**Figure 61** Julie Mehretu, *Middle grey*, 2007–2009, ink and acrylic on canvas, 304.8cm x 426.7cm

This liminal space created in my drawings, in which some areas of indexical trace are rendered whilst others are left as a bare, impregnated shadow (Figs 62, 63) evoke for me the meditative state of being that encapsulates me during cultivation and making, in which I intuitively respond to the cycles of life, birth and death, that this project has encompassed.

**Figure 62** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2016, plant material and graphite on paper, detail

**Figure 63** Hilary Green, *Seed drawing*, 2016, plant material on paper, detail in progress

This indexical trace is wholly dependent on the place from which it comes, the patch of ground in which the plant is grown and a place in time during cultivation. The seeds encapsulate my sensorial euphoric connection to land and are emblematic of recalled memories and the future potential interactions with cultivation in which the deep connection to land and life cycles is experienced.

Making the seed drawings was dependent on layers of process; growing and drying plants, layering and pressing them to create embedded textures in paper and finally rendering imagery with graphite. An intuitive response to place and process occurs between moments of action and moments of reflection reminiscent of Mehretu's *Grey Area* (2009) paintings. Commenting about the evolution of imagery, Mehretu says she aims to:

> …intuitively guide that process in some way and then as the painting starts to come together and the architectural drawing starts to interact with the ground and at that moment the painting takes a clear direction or form that I can somewhat envision…usually it's from the first piece of painting that happens on the painting, decisions are made about how layered or simple the picture will evolve (Mehretu 2009).

As for Mehretu, it is the first pressings in the paper that become the ground, the quality of indexical trace, the depth and number of specimens embedded guiding the intuitive process and overall evolution of imagery within the seed drawings. The levels of realism and abstraction within the botanical depiction are dependent upon the quality of the initial indexical trace (Fig. 63). In these works I responded to the information on the paper more so than an intellectually imposed framework. This dramatic shift in making processes and the transformation of pre-established notions is dependent on my sense of place in the rural landscape throughout the duration of cultivation cycles and research. This immersion in nature for long durations is similar to that fostered by John Wolseley and GW Bot. Positioning my practice within nature as opposed to practising in urban environments is vital for developing an artistic language that speaks of the sensorial connection to land. In *Lake Tyrrell, Orange Chat – sun and squall* (2007–2008) by Wolseley (Fig. 64) and *Glyphs and moon* (2012) by Bot (Fig. 65) we see the eloquent use of abstract mark making to create a language that responds to the shifting character of landscape through the fluid duration of time. Similar to the seed drawings, this language describes the connection to land rather than depicting land as an object external to the practitioner.

**Figure 64** John Wolseley, *Lake Tyrrell, Orange Chat – sun and squall*, 2007–2008, found charcoal, graphite and watercolour on paper, 56cm x 154cm

**Figure 65** GW Bot, *Glyphs and moon*, 2012, graphite and watercolour on Colombe paper, 123cm x 83cm

In this series of seed drawings, installed on the floor of the gallery space to recall carpet, there is a reversal of the expression of the cultivated landscape as carpet and the concepts previously established in this project. The process of constructing the works becomes the foremost mode of expressing the carpet. As in weaving, these works are dependent on moments of action and reflection, building layers to create the material art object. Previously with the woven works and

abstract drawn carpets, discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, an intellectualised notion of carpet employing compositional boundaries and abstract symbols is used to metaphorically convey current relationships with economic botany. By reversing intentions, working in an intuitive, fluid, responsive process, the cultivated landscape as carpet is expressed through material construction reflective of my deep connection to land, rather than looking through the carpet to express the cultivated landscape. In these works the abstract fragmentary botanical imagery is symbolic of deconstructing frameworks of empire within intention and process. In doing this, I am creating an impression of botanical imperialism that documents a small patch of ground, comparable to the gallery floor covered with drawings, yet encompasses and subverts an expansive field of relationships to economic botany, therefore, creating a cultural record of place that connects with critical moral issues of our time.

# Conclusion

Germinated by my immersion in rural Northern Tasmania where I became aware of culturally inherited imperial attitudes towards nature, I encountered the notion of botanical imperialism and developed an interest in economic botany. Cultivating heirloom vegetable species as fieldwork I became aware of the appropriation, control, and economic use of plant cultigens in the context of the capitalist world system. Fostering a connection between botany and textiles, revealed as pivotal instruments of imperial global trade, the Mughal 'flower' carpets from the 16th and 17th centuries were pivotal in the formation of the concept of the 'cultivated landscape as carpet' that was established to relate fieldwork to broader concerns about commercial cultivation.

Throughout the exegesis I have discussed my studio works in relation to defining an authentic representation of economic botany with the intention of creating a cultural record of plant conservation. Generating a platform for environmental commentary, I have used this record to reveal elements of imperial intent within current interactions and attitudes toward cultivation. This project is a fluid journey that defies a static world-view, moving through discussions of object representation to a more subject-led art practice.

Early studio works—gouache drawings and woven tapestry—compare imagery from fieldwork to botanical representation found in art, science and commerce. The resultant depictions appeared constrained by intellectualised conceptions of the cultivated landscape and act as a catalyst for, and are integral to, the development and understanding of the ensuing work in which I deconstruct boundaries. Significant technical developments were made within the processes of my textile practice, offering extensions in presenting the woven form as a series of interconnected suspended objects.

This project positions my practice outside of pre-established representations of economic botany within visual arts culture by placing my studio works in the context of visual artists using botanical representation such as Andrew Seward, Lauren Black, Ruth Johnstone and Chris De Rosa; as a platform for environmental commentary such as Fiona Hall, Janet Laurence, Ken and Julia Yonetani; and those responding intuitively to place and making, such as John Wolseley, GW Bot and Julie Mehretu.

Throughout the development of studio works I continually sought to find a language that responds to the shifting character of cultivation through the fluid duration of time. This language is used to describe my connection to land rather than depicting land as an object external to my practice. A tension persisted between my interest in depicting the actuality of plants as we experience them as living organisms, as opposed to static homogenous objects. This is exemplified by the continual

development of abstract botanical symbols and compositional juxtapositions that combine to express the manipulation and transportation of economic botany across global boundaries.

My deep experiential, sensorial connection to land revealed the potency and reverence of seed. Influenced by transformative life events—birth and death—my art making and thinking processes shifted to become intrinsically linked to fluid, intuitive responses to cultivation, comprising networks of interconnected systems, akin to woven fabric. In subsequent drawing works I made and embedded plant material in paper, creating indexical traces of dried seed heads, with fibrous matter, oil stains and soil remnants remaining as textural impressions. Appearing light as air and heavy as ground, with the trace rendered grey and left bare, the liminal space in the drawings evokes the transformational state of being, encapsulated within making, cultivation and life cycles contained within this project.

This exciting trajectory within my practice has great potential for further development in creating immersive installation environments within the gallery space. The examination exhibition highlights this significant transformation of my practice by creating an immersive environment in which my textile and drawing practices are comparatively positioned. The seed drawings are placed on the floor, almost hovering, taking predominance in the space, whilst the suspended, lace-like, verdant *Heirloom air loom* (2011–2012) tapestry series hangs clustered to one side. Looking down to view the drawings and looking up to view the tapestries activates a field of vision that parallels my experience within the patch. Walking through the exhibition space, the trace of cultivation is revealed, aiming to open an encounter with botanical wonderment. This idea of the trace of cultivation persists in my thinking, providing fertile ground for future expansion of intuitive, subject-led material processes within my practice.

The materiality of carpet, a dense, heavy, easily transportable fabric, blanketing what lies beneath—historically associated with wealth and power—metaphorically coalesces with the seemingly disparate fields of knowledge, textiles, botany, ecology, empire and trade that this research intersects. Metaphorical connections are employed throughout this project to aid the development of authentic representations of economic botany and highlight shifting intellectual notions such as centre and edge, that aimed to evoke moods and atmospheres, disseminating ideas about one of the greatest moral issues of our time, humanity's relationship with cultivation.

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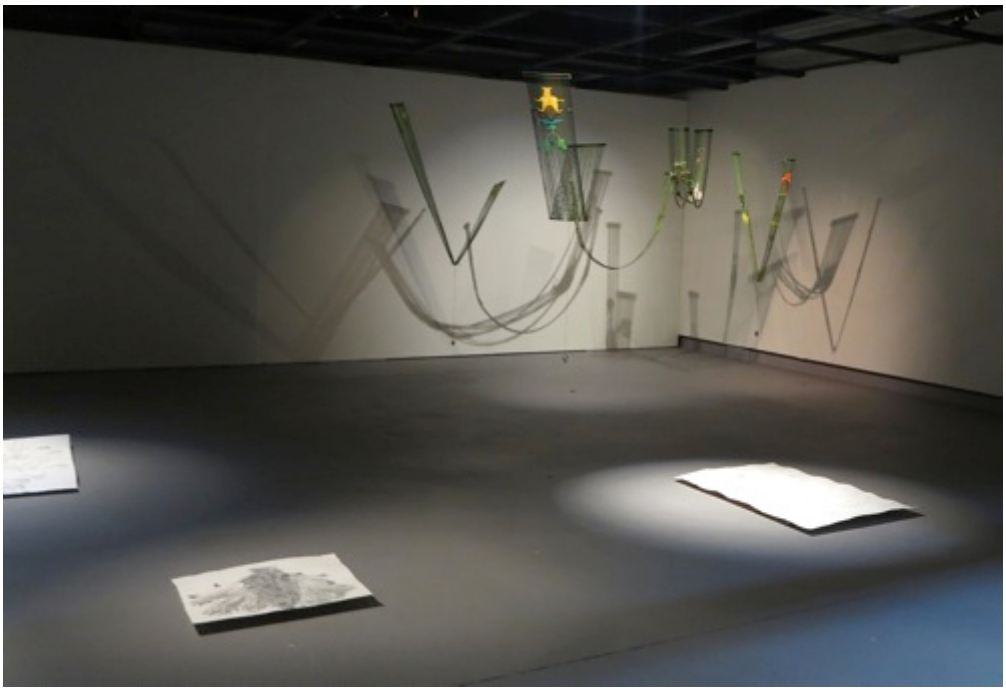
# Appendix

The examination exhibition for *Botanical Imperialism: the cultivated landscape as carpet*, was held at the Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania College of the Arts, Inveresk, Launceston.

The expansive gallery space was carpeted with the seed drawings on low-lying plinths, arranged on the floor, they appear as if hovering slightly above the ground.



The *Heirloom Air Loom* (2010-2012) tapestries suspended in the back corner also hovering, amid air, subtly quivered as air currents circulated within the gallery space.

The dynamic character of the cast shadows of the *Heirloom Air Loom* (2010-2012) works upon the wall made connections to the dynamic, fluid language of mark making in the drawn works.

The gallery space was arranged so that the shuttling between the overview of the exhibition and nestling into details enhanced the relationship between the two distinctly different, yet intrinsically linked bodies of work.

The spotlighting of the individual works in the gallery space required the viewer to walk through the expanse to become aware of the intricacies and detail of each work. This intentional display device aimed to connect with the subtle revealing of observation and knowledge within the cultivation process, akin to my experience within the fieldwork research.

I was particularly pleased with the synchronicity between the mark making within the seed drawings and the cast shadows made by the woven works. The interplay of these two dynamic elements has presented opportunities for further development in my future practice.